

WESTMINSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

162/165 East Main Street • Westminster, MD 21157 www.wumcmd.org • 410-848-8325 • 410-876-2124

December 31, 2023, 10:30am—Christmas 1



Wesley Covenant Service

Renewing the covenant

Attendance — text “HERE” to 443-234-0806.
Visiting?—text “WELCOME” to 443-234-0806.

INTRODUCTION

In 1663, Richard Alleine, a Puritan, published *Vindiciae Pietatis: or, A Vindication of Godliness in the Greater Strictness and Spirituality of It*. In 1753, it was again published in John Wesley’s *A Christian Library*. Wesley used one chapter, “The Application of the Whole,” on Monday, August 11, 1755, in what probably was the first real celebration of the Covenant Service in the Methodist movement.

Wesley found the service rich and meaningful, as expressed in his *Journal*: “Many mourned before God, and many were comforted” (April 1756); “It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing” (October 1765); “It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences . . . I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backslidings,” (January 1, 1775). In London these services were usually held on New Year’s Day. Around the country the Covenant Service was conducted whenever John Wesley visited the Methodist Societies.

(Continued on page 2)

After the time of Wesley several versions of the Covenant Service were developed, gradually giving Wesley's material less place in the total service. The present service follows our Basic Pattern of Worship, enables the congregation to participate more fully, and updates language. Most significant, the liturgy beginning with the Invitation is taken directly from Wesley's service of 1780.

The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God. (UM Book of Worship 288)

WELCOME

Lynn Kohr

PRELUDE *"Litany on "Let Us Plead for Faith Alone""* (UMH 385) Charles Wesley/Fedak

* CALL TO WORSHIP ~ (TRADITIONAL BYZANTINE CHRISTMAS PRAYER)

Christ is born; give him glory!

Christ has come down from heaven; receive him!

Christ is now on earth; exalt him!

O you earth, sing to the Lord!

O you nations, praise him in joy,

For he has been glorified!

* HYMN *"Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light"* UMH 223

* GATHERING PRAYER ~ (DAVID TRIPP, ENGLAND, 20TH CENT.)

O God, Searcher of all our hearts, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own. As we come to acknowledge your sovereignty and grace, and to enter anew into covenant with you, reveal any reluctance or falsehood within us. Let your Spirit impress your truth on our inmost being, and receive us in mercy, for the sake of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

* PASSING THE PEACE May the peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

KIDS' TIME

LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

Response (as directed): We praise your holy name, O God.

HYMN

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

UMH 221

GOD'S WORD IS READ

Luke 2:22-40

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

WESLEY'S COVENANT SERVICE INVITATION

Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants.
Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him.

Christ has many services to be done.
Some are more easy and honorable,
 others are more difficult and disgraceful.
Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests,
 others are contrary to both.
In some we may please Christ and please ourselves.
But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ
 except by denying ourselves.
It is necessary, therefore,
 that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ.

Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:
Let me be your servant, under your command.
I will no longer be my own.
I will give up myself to your will in all things.

Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.
Lord, make me what you will.
I put myself fully into your hands:
 put me to doing, put me to suffering,
 let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
 let me be full, let me be empty,
 let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and with a willing heart
 give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants.
He is the source of all salvation to those who obey.
Christ will have no servants except by consent;
Christ will not accept anything except full consent
 to all that he requires.

Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.
Confirm this by a holy covenant.

To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once,
to be spent alone before the Lord;
in seeking earnestly God's special assistance
and gracious acceptance of you;
in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant;
in searching your hearts
whether you have already freely given your life to Christ.

Consider what your sins are.

Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are,
and whether you, after having carefully considered them,
are willing to choose them all.

Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant,
rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength,
so you can keep your promise.

Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful.

You have given to the Lord your hearts,
you have opened your mouths to the Lord,
and you have dedicated yourself to God.

With God's power, never go back.

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord.

Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven,
open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

COVENANT PRAYER

**O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
see me as I fall down before you.**

**Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done your will,
for you have promised mercy to me
if I turn to you with my whole heart.**

God requires that you shall put away all your idols.
I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all,
covenanting with you that no known sin shall be allowed in my life.
Against your will, I have turned my love toward the world.
In your power I will watch all temptations that will lead me away from you.
For my own righteousness is riddled with sin,
unable to stand before you.

Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again
if you would let him.

Before all heaven and earth,
I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God.
I take you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion,
and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as your servant,
to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

God has given the Lord Jesus Christ
as the only way and means of coming to God.

Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ
as the only new and living Way,
and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him.
O blessed Jesus, I come to you,
hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked,
unworthy even to wash the feet of your servants.
I do here, with all my power, accept you as my Lord and Head.
I renounce my own worthiness,
and vow that you are the Lord, my righteousness.
I renounce my own wisdom, and take you for my only guide.
I renounce my own will, and take your will as my law.

Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

I do here covenant with you, O Christ,
to take my lot with you as it may fall.
Through your grace I promise
that neither life nor death shall part me from you.

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

I do here willingly put my neck under your yoke, to carry your burden.
All your laws are holy, just, and good.

I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions,
promising that I will strive
to order my whole life according to your direction,
and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

O God, you know that I make this covenant with you today
without guile or reservation.

If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright. And now, glory be to you,
O God the Father, whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father.
Glory be to you, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own
blood, and now is my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit, who by your almighty power have turned my heart from
sin to God.

O mighty God, the Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
you have now become my Covenant Friend.

And I, through your infinite grace, have become your covenant servant. So be it.

And let the covenant I have made on earth be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

Sign: _____

OFFERTORY *"Meditation on "Gerald""* (UMH 410 I Want a Principle Within)

Charles Wesley/Spohr/Hughes

*Doxology

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

UMH 95

*Offertory Prayer

*Text your offering 844-307-2876; Give online at www.wumcmd.org; or Mail to:
Westminster UMC, P.O. Box 2316, Westminster, MD 21158-2316. Thank you.*

* HYMN *"Choose This Day the One You'll Serve"* (sung to tune of UMH 229) bulletin insert

* SENDING FORTH

POSTLUDE (please be seated)

"Voluntary No. 3"

Samuel Wesley (1766-1837)

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE—

8:15am CHAPEL SERVICE—Duvall Chapel

9am EDUCATION HOUR—No Education Hour, today; child/adult education resumes, Jan 7.

10:30am WORSHIP—onsite and online

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES available for pick-up in the Narthex thru Sun, Dec 31, after that pick-up in the Happening Hub or by arrangement with Belinda at FinanceSec@wumcmd.org or x15.

Evaluating the “Rightsizing” of WUMC Campus

Church leadership has identified the possible sale of our office building (162 E Main St) to “right size” our campus, which will reduce expenses and produce capital. Advice from credible real estate analysts suggests this property is quite marketable and could generate significant cash. This money could be used for needed capital improvements within our campus to advance the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Before moving forward with the decision to sell the property, a team consisting of representatives from the SPRC, Trustees, Finance committees and church staff has been created. This team is tasked with exploring the feasibility of moving offices to other spaces within our campus. This may include the consideration of designs and locations for offices, placement of furnishings, and preparation for installation of IT hardware.

Please pray for our church leadership as we navigate through this potential transformation.

Trustees

2023 YEAR END GIVING

- 1) Checks/cash accepted onsite thru Dec 29, 12pm, at 162 E Main Street.
- 2) Electronic donations, either by transfer of funds or stock donation, must be received by our third party processors by Dec 29.
- 3) Mail-in donations must be postmarked by Dec 30, 2023 to be credited to this year and should be mailed to: Westminster UMC, P.O. Box 2316, Westminster, MD 21158-2316.

Questions? Reach out to Belinda at FinanceSec@wumcmd.org or in the office at x15.

A NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM THANKS AND PICK-UP!

THANKS—Thank you to EVERYONE who helped make possible “A Night in Bethlehem” here at WUMC. Cast, marketeers, crew, kitchen crew, set construction, costumers, set-up and take-down crew, generous donors, prayer partners, attendees... just, well, everyone!

We trust and pray that spirits were lifted, hearts moved and joy in the Lord extended. According to our “Census Takers,” some 576 guests were registered. A small number of others walking the area (mostly from the city’s light show in the park) also shared the evening. Altogether, our guests graciously gave a free will offering of \$1165. ...And, a number have already asked, “Next year?”

PICK-UP—A number of you came through with donations of extension cords to help us light and power the event. Thank you so much. **If you have not already picked up your cords, you’ll find them in Jubilee Hall, base of stairs to the right of the stage.** You have marked them with your names, for which we are also most grateful.



SPONSOR A BULLETIN—Scan the QR code to sponsor a bulletin with your dedication— or—go to our website www.wumcmd.org and MEMBER TOOLBOX tab.

SERVICE NOTES INFORMATION BOX

8:15am/10:30am—Music: Peggy Brengle, CAGO—Organist Leading Worship: Rev. Dr. Malcolm Stranathan

10:30am—Liturgist: Lynn Kohr ASL Interpreter: Bill Pond

AV Tech: James Scherck, Kyler Brengle Slides: Kyler Brengle

All music used in today’s service is podcast/streamed with permission from either ONE LICENSE #731177-A or CCLI Licenses #627547 & #20216174. Contact Kyler Brengle, Director of Music Ministries, for additional details, if needed.

Our Mission: “Changing lives through Jesus Christ to make a difference.”

BULLETIN PRAYER LIST (see REQUESTING PRAYER, below)

Our bulletins were printed in advance; apologies for any outdated or missing prayer requests.

Our Church Family

Cooper Reppe

Chuck Sterling

Lynne Rittenberg

Jeff & Marjie Kimble

June & Don Hicks

Wayne Olson

Long-term:

Dan LaFon

Ellis Lawson

Chris Clise

John Carbaugh

Christy Swartzbaugh

Our Family and Friends (requests in the past two months)

Sherri Haines (church administrative assistant)

Our Global Ministries Missionary & World Vision Child

Nan McCurdy, Miguel Mairena (Puebla Mexico) - GBGM

Onney Khosa (Zimbabwe) - World Vision/WUMC UMYF

Those in Military Service

LCDR Tracie Demaree, Navy, serving on an aircraft carrier in The Mediterranean (daughter of Jan Halman-Miller)

Jonyae Curry, Army
(Director of Youth Ministry at Westminster UMC)

Alex Gray, Air Force, Ft. Gordon, GA
(son-in-law of Steve & Darlene Sadowski)

Jason Marusiak, Army, 82nd Airborne Div., Fort Riley, KS
(son-in-law of The Flinns)

MISSION TRIP Least of These Ministries is hosting a mission trip from January 13-20, 2024.

On a Mission Team, you can see & experience first-hand the work we are doing in the Dominican Republic!
Scan the code for registration info.



REQUESTING PRAYER

Submit your prayer request via online, email, or phone:

- Online, www.wumcmd.org/prayer-requests.html
- Email Pastor Malcolm, m.stranathan@wumcmd.org
- Email Rev. Ken, revkenh@starpower.net
- Call the church office, 410-848-8325.

REACH

OUR MISSION: To reach out to those within our congregation who are reaching out to us in need of help.

Are you a church member in need of:

- Funeral Lite Fare
- Meals following recovery or mourning
- Transport to local medical appointments

Please contact REACH, directly, for help:

REACH—DECEMBER

Kristy Vandervalk
(443) 789-0346

MONTHLY 90's BIRTHDAYS

published with permission through LINKS

No 90's birthdays in January

If we missed someone, please reach out to Sherri at s.haines@wumcmd.org.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

by appointment, 410-848-8325

Sherri, s.haines@wumcmd.org
Belinda, financesec@wumcmd.org

SECURITY SYSTEM CONCERNS

**Please conclude church business
and exit the buildings
by 9:30pm, latest.**

TEXTING OPTIONS IN WORSHIP

OFFERING

Text amount
to 844-307-2876



Mail to POB 2316, Westminster 21158

Online offering—please scan QR code

ATTENDANCE

Text "HERE" to 443-234-0806